

Reorganization for the Marine Security Guard Program

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**Reorganization for the Marine Security Guard  
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Submitted by Captain AE Prebe  
FACAD: Major Benson, CG 14  
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## **Reorganization for the Marine Security Guard Program**

"Organization is an important tool of command and control. How we organize can complicate or simplify the problems of execution. By task-organizing our force into capable subordinate elements and assign each its own task, we also organize the overall mission into manageable parts. The organization of our force, then, should reflect the conceptual organization of the plan."<sup>1</sup>

The Marine Security Guard Battalion is a dynamic organization that provides leadership and administration oversight to Marines spread throughout the world. The current organization structure has remained fairly the same since the mid 1980s. Due to the changing geo-political climates throughout the world, requests for Marine Security Guard Detachments at American embassies have reached an all time high. To meet the recent demands MSG Battalion has proposed a reorganization plan that misses the mark because the plan has outlined the creation of superfluous billets that hold little to no merit on the administrative and operational needs of the program.

## **Marine Security Guard Background**

The Marine Security Guard Program was established in 1949 with the activation of the detachment at Cairo, Egypt. Operating under an agreement with the Department of State (Memorandum of Agreement) the Marine Corps trains and

equips Marines for duty at American embassies and consulates. Operation control was granted to the Department of State, while the Marine Corps retained administrative control.<sup>2</sup> Since the initial activation of the Marine Security Detachment at Cairo, Egypt, the numbers of detachments have grown to 140 with an additional eighteen planned activations scheduled for the near future. (The Congressional Cap on the number of standing detachments has been limited to 159.<sup>3</sup>) The MSG program remained relatively unchanged in structure until the 1986 congressional findings from the Laird commission, which resulted in the current command structure represented today.<sup>4</sup> Additional recommendations from the Laird Commission addressed the need for command oversight, which is still the primary mission for the lettered companies today, to conduct semi-annual inspections and command visits.

### **Current command structure**

The structure of the Marine Security Guard Battalion consists of one headquarters company and nine lettered companies located in five countries throughout the world. The locations are as follows:

MSG Bn HQ: Quantico, Virginia

Company A, E, G, H: Frankfurt, Germany

Company B: Abu Dhabi, UAE

Company C: Bangkok, Thailand

Company D, I: Ft Lauderdale, Florida

Company F: Pretoria, Africa

The table of organization for the letter companies is, three to four officers and four to five enlisted personnel, who provide support to an average of sixteen detachments and 109 Marines in their respective area of responsibility (refer to figure 1).<sup>5</sup> This current structure provides the company commanders' with an adequate span of control over their respective detachments; they may travel to all of the detachments twice a year for command visits.<sup>6</sup> For the battalion commander the current structure is not optimal.<sup>7</sup>

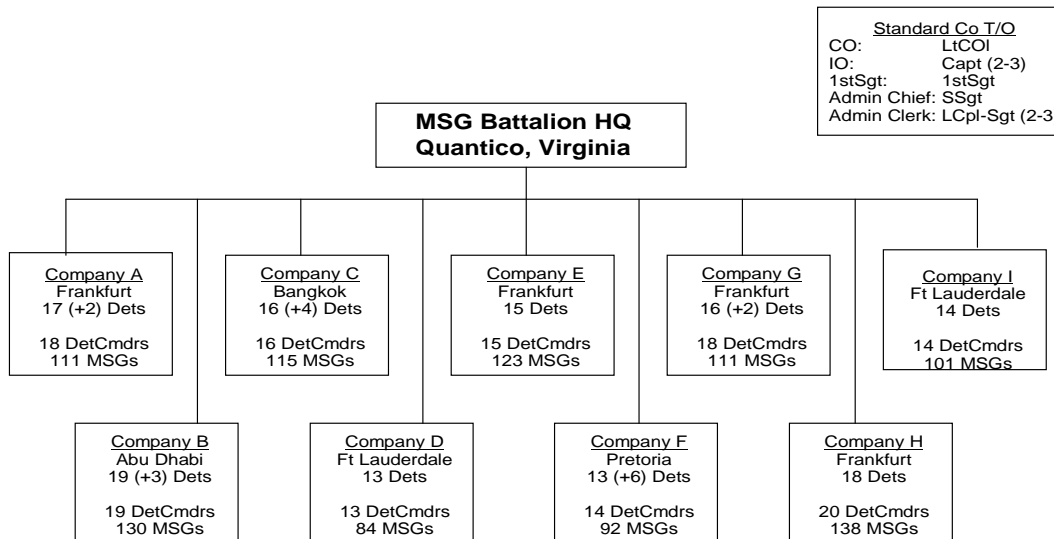


Figure 1

### **Proposed command structure**

The proposed structure of the Marine Security Guard Battalion will consist of one headquarters company and six lettered companies located in six geographic regions. The locations are as follows (refer to figure 2):

- MSG Bn HQ: Quantico, Virginia
- Eastern & Western Europe Regional Cmd: Frankfurt, Germany
- Western Hemisphere Regional Cmd: Ft Lauderdale, Florida
- Far East Regional Command: Bangkok, Thailand
- Near East Regional Command: Abu Dhabi, UAE
- Africa Regional Command: Pretoria, Africa

The proposed table of organization for the letter companies requires seven officers and nine enlisted personnel. The average detachment per company has increased from sixteen under the current structure to twenty six in this proposed structure. The restructuring billet creations are the addition of six majors for the billet of company executive officer, six sergeants major as the senior enlisted advisor, and twelve gunnery sergeants as operation chiefs. To man existing billets eight captains as inspecting officers and six noncommissioned officers as logistics clerks will be required. The consolidation from the restructuring does eliminate three lieutenant colonel and nine first sergeant billets.

### **Benefits of Restructuring**

Reorganizing the companies from nine into six regional commands benefits the battalion command structure by enhancing unity of command, facilitating a centralized command and decentralized control over the detachments (sub commands). This restructuring enhances operational and administrative readiness by reducing redundant reporting commands in Frankfurt, Germany and Ft Lauderdale, Florida. Additional strengths of this proposed restructuring increases the company table of organization (T/O) by four officers and five enlisted personnel, with four increases in the rank associated with certain billets. The three enlisted T/O increases are Marines with prior experience as a detachment commander and one logistics clerk, which increases the resident knowledge about the MSG program within each company.

### **Drawbacks to restructuring**

The drawbacks of this proposed structure reorganization are monetary and personnel costs. The reorganization creates an additional twenty four billets that will require the creation of new line numbers. Manpower increases to MSG battalion means decreases from

other units. This will require approval from HQMC and Department of State, a process which may take years. The housing and personnel costs would be significant, and subject to approval in an already constrained budget.<sup>8</sup>

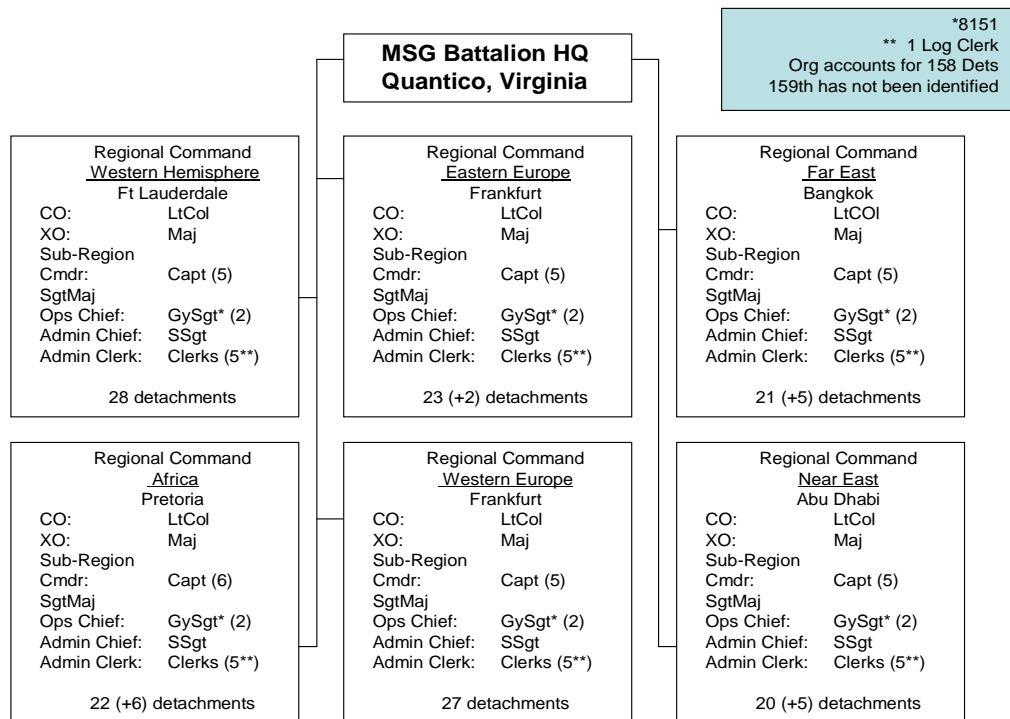


Figure 2

### Counter arguments

The proposed reorganization has many benefits; however, the pros do not outweigh the cons. The Marine Security Guard Program has successfully operated without reorganization since the mid 1980's.<sup>9</sup> The mission has remained the same, and the number of MSG detachments is the same today as it was in 1989.<sup>10</sup> The only structure difference is the number of lettered companies, nine instead of six. The current table of organization for the



lettered companies is sufficient for current operations and does allow for effective command. The additional company headquarters billets of a major as executive officer, two gunnery sergeants as operation chiefs and a log clerk are not necessary, because there is no requirement for them. Ideally an Inspecting officer will be assigned seven or eight detachments for inspecting.<sup>11</sup> The average company in the proposed restructuring will have twenty-eight detachments with five inspecting officers. This workload can be accomplished with only four Inspecting Officers. Every unit in the Marine Corps would love to have excess personnel to lessen the workload per individual Marine, but in this is unrealistic. The proposed restructure will be effective, but is it very inefficient with the superfluous billets that are created.

### **Conclusion**

The Marine Security Guard Program has provided security for classified information and protection for American personnel and property at U.S. embassies around the world for over five decades. Slight structure changes have occurred in this period, but the mission has remained the same. As a result of the changing political climate throughout the world and the continued Global War on

Terrorism, the safeguarding of American embassies will continue to be paramount. The current command structure is more than adequate to meet the needs of the Marine Security Guard Battalion to meet future challenges.

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- <sup>1</sup> MCDP 6 p. 87 Organization Theory
- <sup>2</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between the U. S. Marine Corps and U. S. Dept of State
- <sup>3</sup> MSG proposed command reorganization
- <sup>4</sup> Laird Commission Report
- <sup>5</sup> This average is based off the total number of current detachments and Marines divided by the nine companies.
- <sup>6</sup> Company commanders visit their respective detachments twice per year as directed in BnO P3501.F. Sixteen detachments are about the limit for the company commander, or the time on the road is greater then in the CoHQ.
- <sup>7</sup> A reasonable span of control an individual can effectively command is three to seven subordinates. P 91 MCDP 6
- <sup>8</sup> Marines assigned for duty at embassies abroad fall under the chief of mission. Billeting is provided through the General Service Housing Pool, which can be significant. In Bangkok, Thailand a two bedroom two bathroom apartment averaged \$2000 USD per month during the 2005 fiscal year.
- <sup>9</sup> MSG Bn Command Chronologies 1989 and 2004.
- <sup>10</sup> As of July 2005, MSG Bn has 140 active detachments with an additional eighteen future planned activations.
- <sup>11</sup> This is from personal experience as an inspecting officer with Company C from July 2003-July 2005.

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